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AN UNPRINTED VERSION OF "A CRISTEMASSE SONG."

To the Editors of *Mod. Lang. Notes*.

SIRS:—Among the beautiful carols of the Virgin and her Child, published by Dr. Dyboski from Richard Hill's *Commonplace-book*,¹ there is none more touching than the *Gloria in Excelsis*, as it might be called. The dialogue between the holy mother and her son, carried through eleven stanzas, depicts the heart-wrung Maiden, distraught at the grief of her Child, learning for the first time of the sorrows that are in store. At the same time there ring above this poignant sorrow the joyous notes of the angels singing in heaven. "The poem," says Professor Padelford,² "portrays the crushing grief of the Virgin with the naïve fidelity and tenderness characteristic of medieval workmanship."

It needs no excuse, therefore, if I call the attention of students of the period, and particularly of the editors of future carols, to a manuscript containing the first stanzas of this carol, in an unnoticed version decidedly better than that published by Dr. Dyboski. This ms., Laud 683, is probably not later than 1460, and it therefore antedates the Hill version by at least seventy years. Its version corrects that of the worthy song-loving freeman of Grocers Hall, to an extent that makes printing the whole text advisable. I therefore subjoin a literal transcript of the Laud copy, which is on the last folio, 105b, an odd page left vacant. The leaves which contained the rest of the song, and possibly other carols, are lost. As is customary in such texts the refrain is given as a heading, and not repeated in full thereafter.

HERE BEGYNNETH A CRISTEMASSE SONG.

[fol 105b

Synge we with angelis. gloria in excelsis ^a

A babe is born, our blysse to brynge,¹

A maide ther was dyd² lully and synge;

¹ Early English Text Society, Extra Series, CI (1908). The poem is printed pp. 21-23. It has also been printed by Flügel in *Festschrift für R. Hildebrand*, 1894, and in *Anglia*, xxvi, 247 (1903). Prof. Holthausen corrected his text in *Anglia*, xvii, 444.

² *Cambridge History of English Literature*, II, 382. He seems ignorant of this Laud text.

She saide: "dere sone, leve thy wepynge,
Thy flader ys the kyng of blys."
Synge we, [with angelis, gloria in excelsis].

"Lullay," she sange and saide³ also,
"My nowne⁴ dere sone, why artow⁵ wo?
Hauē I not do that⁶ I sholde do?
Thy grevaunce, telle me what it is!"
Synge we, [etc.]

"Nay, modir,⁷ for this⁸ wepe I nought,
But for the wo that shal be wrought
To me, er⁹ I mankynde haue bought:
Was neuer no¹⁰ sorwe so lyk, I wys."¹¹
Synge we, [etc.]

"A, pore dere sone!¹² telle me not soo,
Thow art my child, I haue no moo;
Sholde I se men myn owne sone slo?
Allas! dere child,¹³ what menyth¹⁴ this?"
Synge we, [etc.]

"Yis, modir, myn handis,¹⁵ that ye here¹⁶ se,
They¹⁷ shal be nailed to¹⁸ a tre,
My fleet also fastened¹⁹ schul be;
That man shal wepe that seeth²⁰ this."
Synge we, [etc.]

"Allas, dere child!²¹ hard ys myn²² happe,
To se my sone that sook²³ my pappe,
His handys, or²⁴ feet, that I sholde lappe,²⁵
Be nailed so sore,²⁶ that neuer dyd amys."
Synge we [with angelis, gloria in excelsis].

Variants in Hill's version: Refrain ^a. Now synge (in every case). This points to the dropping of final -e as a song syllable, in Hill's version. 1. to blys us brynge. Holthausen corrected to "us blis to brynge"; but Dyboski defended Hill, and said *brynge* might be subjunctive. 2. I hard a mayd. 3. said & songe. 4. Myn own. 5. art bow. 6. as. 7. Nay dere moder. 8. þe. 9. or. 10. om. Hill. 11. ywis. 12. Pesse dere sone. 13. my dere son! 14. menys. 15. My hondis, moder. 16. may. 17. om. Hill. 18. vnto. 19. all so fast. 20. Men shall wepe that shall se. 21. A, dere son! 22. my. 23. sokid. 24. his. 25. dide wrappe. 26. Be so naylid.

HENRY NOBLE MACCRACKEN.

WRITERS WITH NEW IDEAS.

To the Editors of *Mod. Lang. Notes*.

SIRS:—When a writer or speaker is struck powerfully by a new idea, he generally shows marvelous ingenuity in working it into his next production. I have found what seems to me a curious instance of this often exemplified tendency. In *Les Annales Politiques et Littéraires* for March 28th, the French critic Émile Faguet re-

views Charles Régismanset's collection of epigrams entitled "Les Contradictions." The reviewer is especially struck by the warning :

"Ne dis pas :
 " — Je n'aime pas la danse.
 " Mais :
 " — Je danse mal."

He applies this bit of searching criticism to various phases of life, and quotes it repeatedly in the course of his review.

In the April number of the *Quarterly Review*, the hundredth anniversary of Tennyson's birth is commemorated by an appreciation of the English poet from the pen of the same French critic. In the course of a rapid summary of the chief facts of Tennyson's life, Faguet says :

"Après quelques changements de résidence il se fixe à Farringford, dans l'Île de Wight, s'y complait et y caresse son bonheur, ne s'écartant de ce lieu que rarement pour aller à Londres qu'il aime peu ou plutôt où il s'aime peu."

R. T. HOUSE.

Southwestern State Normal School, Weatherford, Okla.

"NEVER LESS ALONE THAN WHEN ALONE."

To the Editors of Mod. Lang. Notes.

SIRS:—In connection with the comment in *Modern Language Notes* for February and April by Professor Cook and Professor Allen on the source of the apothegm, "Never less alone than when alone," I venture to call attention to the opening sentences of Cowley's essay, "*Of Solitude*," which are as follows:—

"*Nunquam minus solus, quam cum solus*" is now become a very vulgar saying. Every man and almost every boy for these seventeen hundred years has had it in his mouth. But it was at first spoken by the excellent Scipio, who was without question a most worthy, most happy, and the greatest of all mankind. His meaning, etc."

Professor Allen's citation of Cicero's *De Officiis* (3. 1) apparently determined the source of the apothegm for English literature, but Cowley's testimony to its longstanding popularity seems worth quoting.

W. F. BREWER.

Montana Agricultural College.

LITERATURE OF MELANCHOLY.

To the Editors of Mod. Lang. Notes.

SIRS:—In his *Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement* (p. 91), Professor Phelps says regarding the "literature of melancholy" which flourished in the middle and latter half of the eighteenth century, "Of course its original inspiration from *Il Penseroso* is indisputable." Professor Beers, in his more extended work on the same subject, is guarded in his statements but seems to think Milton's poem was an important influence upon this so-called "graveyard poetry." Altho one or the other of these opinions has been accepted by most students of eighteenth century literature, both seem to me to be based upon a confusion of several quite different things and a misunderstanding of Milton's poem.

In the first place, the fondness of the eighteenth century for gloom found expression in a number of notable works which were entirely uninfluenced by *Il Penseroso*, for example, Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742–8), Blair's *Grave* (1745), and the less known *Night* (1728) of Ralph in poetry, and in prose James Harvey's *Meditations among the Tombs* (1745–6). There is also a remarkable expression of it as early as 1725 in a letter of the poet Thompson's, "Now I imagine you seized with a fine romantic kind of melancholy on the fading of the year; now I figure you wandering, philosophical and pensive, amidst the brown, withered groves, while the leaves rustle under your feet, the sun gives a farewell, parting gleam . . . Then again when the heavens wear a more gloomy aspect, the winds whistle, and the waters spout." It seems pretty clear, accordingly, that *Il Penseroso* did not furnish the original inspiration for the "literature of melancholy." To what degree did it influence that literature?

About 1740 Milton's octosyllabics became very popular and furnished a model for hundreds of poems. It would be natural to suppose, if *Il Penseroso* were closely connected with the poetry of gloom, that a large number of these imitations would be of a melancholy character and that many of them would breathe the clammy air of the tomb. This is very far from being the case. My recollection of the four hundred and more poems